

**FAO: Environmental Mandate & Activities**  
**Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean**

**Environmental Mandate**

The challenge facing agriculture is to satisfy people's rights to food security and, at the same time, ensure that the natural resource base remains productive for the future. As populations grow, and land and water resources dwindle, the world must make a rapid shift to sustainable agriculture and rural development. This approach seeks to ensure that present and future generations have equal access to the total capital of natural and human resources.

The FAO's Sustainable Development Department serves as a global reference centre for knowledge and advice on biophysical, biological, socio-economic and social dimensions of sustainable development. It was established by FAO in January 1995, in response to the need to take a more holistic and strategic approach to development support and poverty alleviation. The Department is also charged with the responsibility of coordinating FAO's follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the post-UNCED conventions and to the international summits on population, social development and women.

**Environmental Activities**

The FAO's Sustainable Development Department focuses on four key dimensions of sustainability:

- Sustainable livelihoods, people's participation and mainstreaming of gender and population issues
- Agrarian transformation and institutional reform
- Research, extension, education and communication
- Natural resource monitoring and management.

It promotes sustainability concepts, strategies and methods in each of these areas, and helps integrate them in the development programmes of both FAO member countries and the Organization's own technical units.